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ABSTRACT

Despite their vital role in open-access, two-year colleges, remedial education efforts have increasingly come under attack by legislators and the public, who view such programs as duplicating the appropriate function of high schools, and who believe that limited state resources should be devoted to more prestigious programs. For a college to effectively defend such a program, it is crucial that it be linked to the institution's mission. In addition, a college's accountability analysis of its remedial programs should focus on the program population, rather than on a description of the program. At Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) in Arnold, Maryland, a comparison of remedial students with the general student population revealed that minority students, transfer-oriented students, and full-timers were all over-represented among remedial students. This data can help the college convince a skeptical public that its remedial programs are improving retention rates for minority students and full-time, transfer-oriented students, both populations the programs were intended to help. Appropriate outcomes assessments are also vital in demonstrating a program's importance. At AACC, outcomes measures have shown that: (1) over half of remedial students successfully complete developmental courses; (2) first-time remedial students have higher fall-to-spring retention rates than first-time students as a whole; and (3) most remedial English students successfully complete subsequent college-level courses. Finally, cost analyses can help demonstrate a program's value. At AACC, such analyses have shown that developmental courses had lower costs per student than the average general education course. Tables are included. (PAA)

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PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL (REMEDIAL) EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Divergent trends in education and the political environment influence discussions about developmental (remedial) education programs. On one side, colleges must respond to accreditation agencies which require provision of programs commensurate with responsible admissions policies. Most community colleges offer developmental programs as they endorse a policy of open-door admission in an effort to make post-secondary education accessible to all segments of the community. Additionally, many four-year colleges provide developmental programs "in response to changing enrollment patterns of entering freshmen, declining high school achievement levels, and adoption of open admissions standards" (NCES 91-191;1). Yet, the public and politicians often question the need for these programs, suggesting they duplicate the appropriate function of high schools.

Moreover, when faced with budget deficits, States and local governments question the fiscal resources devoted to programs that are not popular or prestigious such as developmental education. The purpose of this paper is to provide a rationale and analyses that could be used to position an institution (in this case, a community college) to respond to an attack on resources associated with developmental or remedial education. The paper will use data from Anne Arundel Community College, but the emphasis throughout will be on providing information that can be applied to programs considered to be essential to a postsecondary institution's mission and, simultaneously, unpopular with the public.

BACKGROUND

Developmental education refers to programs and courses designed to prepare students to perform college level work; other terms that institutions may use include remedial, compensatory, or basic skills (McClinton and McKusick, 1989). A recent National Center for Education Statistics Survey Report (NCES 91-191;iii) reveals that three out of four colleges and universities offered at least one remedial course in fall 1989. Nevertheless, according to this same report many institutions could not provide student outcomes measures for students who enrolled in at least one remedial course. Significantly, this lack of information on student outcomes coincides with increasing federal and State reporting requirements on student outcomes, including graduation or completion rates.

An extensive current literature discusses evaluation of developmental programs. Bers, 1987, provided an excellent review of evaluation issues in relation to developmental education. She explained the special nature of developmental programs, outlining the differences in definitions, components, purposes and structures that often typify these programs, and provided a model remedial program evaluation design. Budig, 1986 and Bers, 1988 contributed two relatively recent program evaluations. Additionally, the 1989 NCES Survey results suggested that almost all institutions conduct some form of evaluation of their developmental program--most commonly student evaluations, instructor evaluations or student course or program completion rates (1991;10).

The literature on developmental programs also acknowledges the political sensitivity of these programs. McClinton and McKusick referred to the reluctance of legislators to reimburse colleges for teaching basic skills "which ought to have been mastered in elementary and secondary schools" (1989,1). Bers stated, "Legislators and other public officials wonder why money must be spent at the college level to assist students in obtaining proficiencies they should have had at the time of high school graduation" (1987,7).

Finally, these developmental education program evaluations and the 1989 NCES Survey suggest that institutions often lack routinely collected analyses that could be used to provide for comparability and public accountability. One problem is that colleges have not consistently defined, analyzed or reported performance outcome measures. For example, the NCES Survey reported that it could not compare retention rates to the second year for students enrolled in developmental courses with those for all freshmen because too few institutions maintained these records to furnish a national estimate (1991,12).

Current practice in the presentation of institutional evaluations constitutes another problem. Everyone would agree that the purpose of an evaluation will affect its methodology and presentation. An explicit concern about public accountability dictates an evaluation strategy that provides analyses that are simple, direct and, if at all possible, equipped with "emotional hooks" politicians and the public are less likely to criticize. Of course, this does mean a researcher will unscrupulously manipulate the data or preclude more sophisticated analyses as a backup or base for the simpler tables presented for public accountability. It also does not prevent analyses primarily focused on the goals of improvement and program evaluation.

ANALYSIS

Linkage to Mission. Key to the defense of a program is its tie to the institution's mission. Anne Arundel Community College's developmental education program has a direct tie to the college's mission. Like all community colleges in Maryland, Anne Arundel is an open-door institution and must provide programs and curricula to carry

out this mission. By law, admission is granted to all high school graduates, students with a high school equivalency certificate, and persons who are not high school graduates and who present evidence through testing or other means of the ability to profit from the instruction the institution offers.

Accreditation standards require the college to offer programs and curricula "commensurate with the obligations inherent in a responsible admissions policy" (Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 1990). Maryland regulations even more directly state "an institution which maintains an open-door policy shall make adequate provision for placement testing, counseling and compensatory services" (COMAR 13B.02.03.09). Certainly the college could not be considered "responsible" if it did not offer a program for students in need of review or basic preparation for college instruction. Any public presentation should include direct references to a program's mission centrality, as well as any legal requirement the program fulfills.

Description of Population. Instead of focusing on a description of the program (policies governing placement, types of courses or instruction offered, qualifications and funding of faculty, and sources of funding), an accountability analysis will provide information on the program population. For example, Table 1 displays simple percentage information describing the population at Anne Arundel who are enrolled in Math and English developmental courses compared with the total student body.

Table 1. Students Enrolled In English and Math Developmental Courses Compared To All Students, Fall 1991.

	Students Enrolled In Math Developmental Program	Students Enrolled In English Developmental Program	Total Students
	1197	724	12,401
	10%	6%	100%
Male	52%	48%	41%
Full-time	52%	54%	28%
Minority	14%	22%	12%
Transfer Goal	67%	57%	45%
New	35%	60%	28%
New High School Graduate	35%	48%	11%

Source: OPR 1991

The data suggest that at Anne Arundel, the following subgroups are over-represented in the developmental population.

- Male Students
- Minority Students
- Students Who Intend to Transfer
- Full-time Students
- New to the College
- Recent High School Graduates

These student characteristics provide ammunition to convince a skeptical public that the developmental program is assisting populations the programs were intended to help. Using the data our arguments might be:

1. Because student achievement is a significant concern in the state of Maryland and in Anne Arundel County, the college in the past year had made a written commitment to improve the retention rates of minority students. This program serves that group of students.

2. The profile shows that the developmental student population includes a high percentage of students who have a goal of transferring to a four-year college, who are attending college full-time, and who are new to college. These characteristics may indicate a student's deepening maturity; it is reasonable to suggest that many of our developmental students are getting serious about their future for the first time. The students who enroll in developmental courses must pay tuition but earn no credits toward graduation--this is at least one indication of an intention to succeed.

Information is more powerful if it clearly differentiates who is adversely affected if programs are eliminated. In this case, it would be very difficult for politicians to recommend eliminating a program that inordinately affects minority and male students who seem to be taking steps to achieve a serious goal.

Outcomes Assessment. It is obvious that public accountability demands an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. Anne Arundel Community College uses several measures to evaluate the developmental program, including course completion and success rates, retention rates, and outcomes related to the purpose of developmental courses (to prepare students to succeed in performing college level work).

Course Completion Success Rates. One measure of the effectiveness of a developmental program is whether the students enrolling in the courses actually complete them successfully. At Anne Arundel, a course completion success rate refers to the percent of official, third week registrants who earned passing grades of C or higher. Table 2 provides Fall 1990 course completion success rates by

developmental subject area and course compared with overall division course success percentages.

Table 2. Developmental Course Success Rates Compared To Divisional Course Success Rates, Fall 1990.

Developmental Courses	Developmental Course Success Percentage	Divisional Course Success Percentage
English 001	69%	
English 002	73%	
English 003	91%	
English 005	88%	
Totals	73%	71%
Math 010	62%	
Math 011	55%	
Math 012	45%	
Totals	53%	58%

* Success is defined as earning a grade of A, B, C, or Pass.

Source: OPR 1991

This information shows that with the exception of one course, well over 50 percent of the students complete the developmental courses successfully. In English, an average of 73 percent of the developmental students received a grade of A, B, C, or Pass, slightly higher than the overall English division course success rate percentage. In math, 53 percent of the developmental students succeed, quite comparable to the 58 percent success rate in all math courses.

The data show that a majority of students who are unprepared for college actually succeed when they enroll in developmental courses.

Retention Rates. A second measure of effectiveness the college is based on whether developmental students are retained in college. Anne Arundel reviews "fall to spring retention rates," which refer to the number of students enrolled in the fall

who return for classes in the spring, measured at the third week of classes, and "fall to fall retention rates, " which refer to the number of students enrolled in the fall who return for classes the next fall, measured at the third week of classes.

A review of retention rates show that developmental first-time freshmen have higher retention rates than the college average. Table 3 illustrates that the fall to spring average semester retention rate is fifteen percent higher than the overall college first-time retention rate, and the fall to fall average retention rate is twelve percent higher.

Table 3. Developmental First-time Freshmen Student Average Retention Rates Compared To College First-time Freshmen Rates, Fall 1990.

Cohort	Average Fall to Spring Retention Rate	Average Fall to Fall Retention Rate
Developmental Students	69%	52%
Total College	53%	40%

Note: Averages reflect five years of data.

Source: OPR 1991

This information could be used as contributory evidence that developmental students are serious and are succeeding in college.

Preparation for Credit Courses. Direct evidence of the effectiveness of the developmental program is provided by examining the student outcomes of students who have completed their developmental requirements and enrolled in the regular credit course sequence. Figure 1 displays the results of a study where the college found that success in the English developmental courses was a strong indicator of success in the first college credit English course, and overall the success rate of students who had completed their developmental requirements was only slightly lower than students with no developmental requirements.

Figure 1. Credit English Course Success Rates by Group, New Students Enrolled in Fall 1986, Spring 1987, Fall 1987, Spring 1988, or Summer 1988 Tracked Through Fall 1988.

	Completed Developmental English Requirements	No Developmental English Requirements
Students With a Grade of A,B,C	252	1547
Total Students	380	2107
Success Rate	66%	73%

Source: Tripp, 1991

It is important to note that no significant differences were found in success rates between students who had completed developmental requirements and those students who had no developmental requirements and could immediately enroll in the first credit English course. Or, more simply, the developmental program had successfully prepared a majority of students to succeed in college level English.

Credit Course Outcomes For Selected Student Cohorts. A final set of outcomes information provides indirect evidence of the effectiveness of the developmental program. Table 4 presents an analysis of course success and attrition rates in the college's four highest enrollment courses by differentiating three student cohorts:

- No Developmental Requirements Cohort--students that had submitted all required documents for enrollment, such as high school transcript or GED, SAT or ACT scores, and as a result had been assessed as having no developmental requirements,

- Completed Developmental Requirements Cohort--students that were deemed in need of remediation at the time of their original enrollment, who then completed all developmental courses by they time they enrolled in the high enrollment classes,

- Developmental Requirements Cohort--students whose academic records or placement scores indicated they must complete certain developmental courses, but who had not completed these courses at the time they enrolled in the high enrollment courses.

Table 4. Average Course Success Rates by Four Student Cohorts (All Students, Students With No Developmental Requirements, Students Who Have Completed Their Developmental Requirements, and Students With Uncompleted Developmental Requirements), Fall 1989-Spring 1991.

	All Students	No Dev. Requirements	Completed Dev. Req.	Uncompleted Dev. Req.
Course 1 Success Rate*	66%	74%	67%	48%
Course 2 Success Rate	71%	76%	70%	58%
Course 3 Success Rate	76%	80%	76%	61%
Course 4 Success Rate	77%	81%	81%	62%

* Each course success rate is an average rate using four semesters of data (fall 1989, spring 1990, fall 1990, spring 1991).

Source: Richards, 1991

Table 4 shows that the student outcomes found in the four courses are broadly similar. Students with no developmental requirements tend to have the highest success rates. Students who have completed their developmental requirements have slightly lower, but still high success rates. Alternatively, students who have not completed their developmental requirements have significantly lower success rates. This information suggests that students have a better chance of succeeding if they complete the developmental requirements before attempting subsequent college level work.

Program Cost. If the data is available it is a good strategy to provide cost information on a program under scrutiny. Anne Arundel was fortunate to be part of a statewide system of Discipline Cost Analysis that provides cost per FTE (full-time equivalent) student data. Table 5 displays the cost per FTE for our English and Math developmental programs.

Table 5. Discipline Cost Report, Anne Arundel Community College, Fiscal Years 1987, 1988, 1989

	FY 1987	FY 1988	FY 1989
Developmental English	$2,215 161 FTE	$1,914 176 FTE	$1,065 205 FTE
Developmental Math	$3,149 134 FTE	$3,402 137 FTE	$1,797 174 FTE
All General Education	$3,159 3144 FTE	$3,248 3350 FTE	$3,193 3852 FTE

Source: OPR 1991

At Anne Arundel, the developmental education programs have a lower cost per FTE (full-time equivalent) student than the average general education course cost.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Public accountability dictates an evaluation strategy that provides simple and direct information. This paper recommends presenting the following data:

- Tie to Mission (or legal requirements)
- Concrete Description of the Population Affected
- Effectiveness or Outcomes Information
  - Course Completion Success Rates
  - Retention Rates
  - Success In College Level Courses
- Cost Per FTE

In the case study presented, it seems clear that Anne Arundel Community College's developmental program is essential to its mission as presently defined; that a majority of the students who are affected by the requirement have clearly defined educational goals; that by several measures of effectiveness the program is accomplishing what it was intended to accomplish--students are succeeding in the courses and are retained in college and, most importantly, they are succeeding in subsequent college level work; and finally that the program is not extravagant.

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